

committee. Thank you.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, even though our numbers are thin, if there is anybody out there listening who is willing to give me some time, I wish they'd come in here and turn their light on. How's...is this my third time on this? Oh, so I have one more anyway, might give somebody, Senator Hall, or Senator Will, wherever you are, somebody come in here and give me some time. Senator Abboud has said he is willing to work on this and look at the issue, and I believe him, and on the record, for the record I want to make it crystal-clear, I, and Senator Abboud didn't take it this way, but some people may have misunderstood. I am not indicating that Senator Abboud, by having brought the bill that created the difference in the way these drugs are handled, is being a racist. I am not saying that, and he did not understand me to say that. But what I am saying is that when you look at the impact, you can see the racism in the way this drug is handled, and I'm saying the racism came into play when white people became aware that crack existed. They became aware of it because their kids were dealing with it. Now, I am not interested, as some people think I might be, in saying let's throw the book at some white people. Since they've been throwing the book at black people, now we've got a chance to do the same thing to the white people. What I'm saying is that this kind of sentencing structure is inappropriate for everybody. That's what I'm saying. The disparity and the problem was created not because the punishment for powder cocaine is unreasonably low. The problem is that the punishment for crack is unreasonably high. And what the Federal Sentencing Commission is doing is reducing the punishment for crack. Nobody has said that the penalty for powder cocaine is inadequate, nobody. What we ought to do, since we are dealing with this issue, is to bring equity into the sentencing. Senator Pedersen and others, you all might be shocked if I told you the feelings that I have about people who will sexually abuse little children, and I've tried to get the death penalty abolished. But my personal feelings cannot be the basis on which I seek legislation. If I were a judge, I could probably be the fairest judge that ever sat on the bench because, as in this case, I'd be as interested in the rights of white people who are accused as I am of black people, and this is why the law